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ABSTRACT

This fact sheet lists 20 interpreted statistics on women workers. The facts cover the following data: number of women workers and their percentage in the labor force; length of time women are expected to stay in the labor force; racial and ethnic groups in the labor force; part-time and full-time employment; types of occupations in which women are employed; unemployment rate of women; reasons why women work; percentage of family income earned by working wives; women in poverty; education and likelihood of working; median income of women; women entrepreneurs; working mothers; and female heads of families. The data for the fact sheet were taken from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' "Employment and Earnings, January 1988." (KC)

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Facts on Women Workers

U. S. Department of Labor
Office of the Secretary
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Fact Sheet No. 88-2

1. Nearly 54 million women 16 years of age and over were working or looking for work in 1987. Ten years earlier, about 41 million women were in the civilian labor force. Women accounted for more than three-fifths (62 percent) of the increase in the civilian labor force since 1977--13.0 million women compared with 7.8 million men.

2. In 1987, 67 percent of all women 18 to 64 years of age, or 50.8 million women, were in the civilian labor force compared with 88 percent of all men in this age group. Fifty-six percent of all women 16 years of age and over were labor force participants. Participation was highest among women 35 to 44 years of age; 75 percent of women in this age group were in the labor force.

3. The average woman worker 16 years of age in 1979-80 could expect to spend 29.3 years of her life in the labor force, compared with 39.1 years for a 16-year-old man. White and black women could expect to spend 29.6 and 27.8 years, respectively, of their lives in the labor force.

4. Women accounted for 44.8 percent of all persons in the civilian labor force in 1987. Among these, half of all black workers were women; 44.1 percent of all white workers were women; and 39.5 percent of all Hispanic workers were women.

5. The influx of women into the labor force during the 1970's and early 1980's has resulted in nearly equal labor force participation rates among black women, white women, and women of Hispanic origin. In 1987, 58.0 percent of black women (6.5 million), 55.7 percent of white women (45.5 million), and 52.0 percent of Hispanic women (3.4 million) were in the labor force. The first time at least 50 percent of Hispanic women of working age were in the labor force was in 1986.

6. About 14 million or 28 percent of all women workers in nonagricultural industries held part-time jobs (less than 35 hours a week) in 1987. Seventy-nine percent of the part-time workers were employed on a voluntary basis. Almost two-thirds (65.2 percent) of all part-time workers were women.

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7. Women continue to constitute large proportions of workers in traditionally female occupations. In 1987 women represented 80 percent of all administrative support (including clerical) workers, but only about 9 percent of all precision production, craft, and repair workers. Women were 69 percent of all retail and personal services sales workers but only 38 percent of all executives, managers, and administrators. There were 15,566 women working as apprentices in 1987. This was 6.4 percent of all apprentices.

8. The unemployment rate for all women in the labor force was 6.2 percent in 1987; for women 20 years of age and over, it was 5.4 percent. Despite reduced population and therefore less competition, teenagers, especially blacks and Hispanics, experienced very high unemployment rates.

1987 UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

Teenagers (16-19 years)	Rate	Adults (20 years of age and over)	Rate
Black men	34.4	Black men	12.9
Black women	34.9	Black women	11.1
Hispanic men	24.5	Hispanic men	7.8
Hispanic women	25.1	Hispanic women	7.7
White men	15.5	White men	4.8
White women	13.4	White women	4.6

Source: U. S. Department of Labor: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment and Earnings, January 1988.

9. Most women work because of economic need. The majority of women in the labor force (60 percent) in March 1987 were either single (25 percent), divorced (12 percent), widowed (4 percent), separated (4 percent), or had husbands whose 1986 earnings were less than $15,000 (15 percent).

10. Wives in the labor force contribute substantially to family income. In March 1987, 56 percent of married couple families had wives in the paid labor force as compared with 40 percent in March 1972. In 1986 the median income of married couple families with the wife in the paid labor force was $38,346 compared with $25,803 for those without the wife in the paid labor force.

11. Women represented 63 percent of all persons 16 years old and over with poverty level incomes in 1986. The poverty rate of all persons in families maintained by women with no husband present was 34.2 percent; for related children in those families it was 54.4 percent. There were 3.6 million families maintained by women (no husband present) that had incomes below the poverty level in 1986.

12. The more education a woman has, the greater the likelihood she will seek employment. Among women 25 to 54 years of age with 4 or more years of college in March 1987, 82 percent were in the labor force. Among women of the same age group with less than 4 years of high school, 70 percent were in the labor force in March 1987.

13. The median income of women who worked year round, full time in 1986 was $16,843 and $25,894 for men. Geographically, women who resided in the western and northeastern sections of the United States had slightly higher median incomes than those living in the southern and midwestern portions of the country in 1986.

1986 MEDIAN EARNINGS
YEAR-ROUND, FULL-TIME WORKERS

All women	$16,843	All men	$25,894
White women	17,101	White men	26,617
Black women	14,964	Black men	18,766
Hispanic women	14,191	Hispanic men	17,008

Source: U. S. Department of Commerce: Bureau of the Census, Money Income and Poverty Status of Families and Persons in the United States: 1986 (Advance data from the March 1987 Current Population Survey).

14. The median income of female high school graduates (with no college) working year round, full time in 1986 was somewhat higher than that of fully employed men who had completed less than 8 years of elementary school--$15,947 and $14,485, respectively. In 1986 women with 4 years of college education had a median income below that of men who had only a high school diploma--$22,412 and $24,701, respectively.

15. Women are still heavily concentrated in low paying jobs. Thus, the average woman earns 65 cents for every dollar earned by the average man when both work year round, full time. According to 1987 median weekly earnings data, the five most lucrative occupations for women are: lawyers, physicians, engineers, personnel and labor relations managers, and computer systems analysts and scientists.

16. More women are choosing to be entrepreneurs--starting their own businesses. The number of women-owned businesses in the United States rose from 1.9 million in 1977 to 3.3 million in 1983. Women's share of all nonfarm sole proprietorships rose from nearly 23 percent in 1977 to 28 percent in 1983.

17. The 33 million women with children under age 18 had a labor force participation rate of 64.7 percent in March 1987. About 57 percent of mothers with preschool children (8.9 million mothers) were labor force participants in March 1987.

18. About 33 million children (55.8 percent) under age 18 had working mothers in March 1987. Ten million children under age 6 (48.7 percent) had working mothers in March 1987.

19. In 1986 women maintained 51 percent of all poor families. They maintained: 75 percent of poor black families, including 3.2 million related children; about 49 percent of Hispanic families, including 1.2 million related children; and 42 percent of poor white families, including 3.5 million related children.

20. Women are maintaining an increasing proportion of all families (16.6 percent in 1987). In white families, women maintained 13 percent; in black families, 43 percent; and in Hispanic families, 23 percent. Slightly more than two fifths (42 percent) of the 3.8 million increase in family households between 1980 and 1986 was attributable to families maintained by women. In contrast, between 1940 and 1960, families maintained by women accounted for only 8 percent of the increase in the number of families. The majority of these lone parent women are in the labor force.

FAMILIES MAINTAINED BY WOMEN, MARCH 1987

	Number of Families	Percent of Families	Labor Force Participation Rate of Family Head
Total[1]	10,896,000	16.6	62.3
White	7,583,000	13.5	63.8
Black	3,042,000	42.3	58.5
Hispanic Origin	1,069,000	23.9	50.9

[1] Components will not sum to total because data for the "other races" group are not presented separately and Hispanics are included in both the white and black population groups.

Source: U. S. Department of Labor: Bureau of Labor Labor Statistics, Employment and Earnings, January 1988.